FIFTY FACES OF UNCLE SAM

by DONALD R. ELLEGOOD

Ever since Cornell issued *The Cayuga Flora* in the 1870s American university presses have been publishing regional books. But "regional publishing" as a systematic university press activity has had a relatively brief history, dating roughly from the early 1930s and associated especially with two now famous imprints, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Norman, Oklahoma.

In 1945, after twenty years of publishing books from Chapel Hill, W. T. Couch, second director of the University of North Carolina Press, stated well the case for regional publishing. "Every people," he said, with reference to the South, "must do its own learning or accept the consequences of allowing others to take care of this task." By then the North Carolina Press had published about 450 books, more than one-third of which dealt with the South—its history, biography, and literature, social studies about it, including race relations, and the botany and zoology of the region. Together these books helped support a regional identity and created a tradition at Chapel Hill still much in evidence today.

Another pioneer of regional publishing was Savoie Lottinville, recently retired director of the University of Oklahoma Press. "The great task" of a regional press, he said, "is to develop programs that will be carried out over forty or fifty years." This the Oklahoma Press did superbly with its three series on the Civilization of the American Indian, started in 1932 and now running to 100 volumes, the American Exploration and Travel series, and the Western Frontier Library.

With these two great exemplars, North Carolina and Oklahoma, the practice of regional publishing by university presses—of developing long-range programs to serve local needs—quickly spread to other parts of the country.

In 1937 Louisiana State University Press inaugurated a ten-volume History of the South, which only last year was brought to completion with publication of *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*, by George Tindall. In the East notable regional programs early developed at Rutgers and Syracuse, and in the Midwest a number of presses, led by Iowa State and Minnesota, became known for their regional works. Regionalism was practiced in the West on a small but discriminating basis at New Mexico, California and elsewhere by historical societies. One press in Canada—Toronto—played an especially important role by stimulating a whole generation of scholars to undertake serious regional studies of Canadian life and society.

During the 1940s and 1950s a number of new presses came into being, primarily at state universities, including Kentucky, South Carolina, Nebraska and Indiana, which made distinguished contributions to their region's culture. In Connecticut Wesleyan University Press brilliantly demonstrated to older neighboring presses a place for regional publishing in New England.

Strategically located presses such as Florida, Texas, Arizona and Washington extrapolated their regional boundaries to include neighboring cultural areas and began publishing extensively on the Caribbean, Mexico and Latin America, Western Canada and Alaska.

By the 1960s almost every state had its own university press, "service to the region" was a charter obligation, and the publishing of regional books had become truly a nation-wide industry.

Today in many states the university press is the best book publishing

agency in its area—sometimes also the best printer—and its imprint carries considerable cultural responsibility, particularly for the regional book. The increasing role of the university as a patron of the arts, with artists, creative writers and composers, dramatists and dancers being brought on campus, makes it increasingly appropriate for university presses to publish regional art, drama, and fiction, as well as films, music and recordings, as some presses are beginning to do. Indeed, this is a healthy development in sustaining regional variations and preventing the provincialism of the East from becoming standardized as the national pattern.

Many of the regional presses have associated themselves with local art museums and historical societies to mutual benefit, and out of this union have come some very good books, such as *Portrait of a Period: A Collection of Notman Photographs 1856 to 1915* (McGill), a selection of old photographs recording many facets of Canadian life; *The Enduring Navaho*, by Laura Gilpin (Texas), another eloquent pictorial record; and *Art of the Kwaikiutl Indians*, by Audrey Hawthorn, published by Washington jointly with the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology.

A hasty survey of regional presses and their publications shows other new fields opening up. Last year Louisiana State University Press published *New Orleans Jazz* and *Preservation Hall Portraits* and, according to the press director, Richard L. Wentworth, they have plans for another half dozen related titles.

The newly reorganized University Press of Kentucky [see The Publishing Scene, page 46] is "laying rather ambitious plans for regional publishing in conservation and social problems of Appalachia." Their book about the latter, *Yesterday's People*, by Jack Weller, has sold nearly 40,000 copies.

Director John Dessauer, of the University Press of Kansas, which like Kentucky represents a state-wide system of colleges and universities, says, "Of the dozen titles we've published this past year, eight have regional connotations. They range in all areas: art (including Thomas Hart Benton's autobiography, *An American in Art*), literature, natural history, and nature guides."

The University of Tennessee Press has brought out an enlarged edition of its best-selling *Great Smoky Mountains Wildflowers* as part of its natural history series on the Smokies, which includes volumes on mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Coming up shortly will be a one-volume history of Tennessee, the first in more than fifty years; an atlas on Tennessee, and two titles on TVA.

Farther south, Georgia has just released George Gore's *Southern Fiction Today* [see page 53] and plans a new poetry series, not, however, limited to Southern writers. At the University of Florida Press, says its director, William Harvey, "Last year, of twenty-six titles, seventeen could be called regional. Included in this category are books on Florida and Latin American affairs." This press also publishes a series of reprints of old books on Florida with appropriate new introductions.

The best regional book published recently at New Mexico was H. D. Har-

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DONALD ELLEGOOD is director of the University of Washington Press in Seattle.

rington's *Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains*, which has gone into a second printing and shows no signs of slowing up. This thriving press also issued *New Mexico in the Nineteenth Century*, a pictorial history compiled by Andrew Gregg, and plans similar books on Arizona, Colorado, and Utah.

"Indicative of the regional publishing philosophy prevailing at the University of Arizona Press," says the director, Marshall Townsend, "is *Southwest Indian Craft Arts*, by Clara Lee Tanner, an introduction to the appreciation of our Indian cultures." During the last year regional books accounted for twelve of Arizona's twenty-two titles.

At Nebraska, says Bruce Nicoll, the press's director, "the most satisfying regional book we've published is *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux*, with drawings by Amos Badheart Bull, text by Helen Blish, and introduction by Mari Sandoz. This is the fullest picture history of any American tribe."

Even farther west, at the University of Hawaii Press, about half the list will be regional according to Director Robert Sparks. "We are now," he says, "interested in the entire Pacific, not just Hawaii." Specific new projects include an *Atlas of Hawaii* and ethnographies of Pacific cultures, such as *Ancient Tahiti*.

The University of Washington Press has just published *The Great Columbia Plain*, a historical geography by D. W. Meinig, and far away from the wide open spaces, Rutgers has released another historical geography, *The Musconetcong Valley of New Jersey*, a pioneering book by Peter O. Wacker. Rutgers sells substantial quantities of its regional books by placing racks that hold twenty titles at a time in hardware stores, stationery stores, and many kinds of specialty shops.

Most of the large university presses like California and Chicago are not much concerned with regional publishing. At California, a spokesman reports, "We do a lot of publishing in local natural history but not much in other subject fields. . . . Generally speaking, we do far better with a book on Chinese history than one on California history." Chicago has no formal program of regional publishing but the press is open to regional books "if they are scholarly and original and if they have implications for the nation."

But for those presses located in the large urban areas some involvement with the major problems that today confront every region, every large city, may become a critical necessity. As Robert Armstrong of Northwestern University Press points out, "Not only is the urban scene intrinsically interest-

ing, but it becomes increasingly vital for us to understand it as the predominant milieu of the latter half of the twentieth century."

Two presses that have concerned themselves with urban problems are Wayne State, which has just published *The Detroit Riot of 1967*, by the Reverend Hubert Locke, and Case Western Reserve Press, which brought out *The Crisis in Welfare in Cleveland*, a report commissioned by Mayor Carl B. Stokes. "What this book relates about Cleveland," says Case Press Director Howard Webber, "has relevance to the national problem. . . . Cleveland can serve in some sense as a paradigm of the modern American city."

One distinguished regional publisher, Lambert Davis of the University of North Carolina Press, explains this shift of regional emphasis from rural to urban areas. "Looking back over twenty-one years," he says, "I find there is less regional accent to our list today than when I became director. This is partly press policy. Over the years I have tried to give the list a more varied character: for example, publications in the fields of music and contemporary Russian studies. More importantly, I believe, the accent on regionalism in scholarly research has lessened. This has been especially true of the South. Some important regional questions have faded into the background—farm tenantry, for example. Others have nationalized, most notably race. And the big questions now are all national and international—the population explosion, environmental pollution, the racial crisis, the decay of the cities, the peril of nuclear war."

This, then, is the changing face of regional publishing, in all its individual variety and flavor and diversity. Most regional needs—be they historic or cultural—have been, and are being, well served. But the university presses, like the universities themselves, have not been sufficiently responsive to rapidly changing social conditions, to the demands of the present. Here much remains to be done. Badly needed are specific in-depth analyses—by teams of scholars and scientists from a variety of disciplines—of the major urban and regional problems. An inevitable result of the campus revolutions now going on will be the permanent destruction, for better or for worse, of the "ivory tower" concept of the university. The regional presses, while continuing their traditional programs of conserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the past, must necessarily become responsive to, and involved in, contemporary social problems. The presses in the large urban areas therefore are faced with an especially commanding challenge.